

**CARIBBEAN CENTER OF EXCELLENCE  
FOR TEACHER TRAINING:**

**PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

**Basic Education and Policy Support (BEPS) Activity  
Contract No. HNE-I-00-00-00038-00**

## **CARIBBEAN CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FOR TEACHER TRAINING: PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

### **Introduction**

The Caribbean Center of Excellence for Teacher Training (CETT) is one of three Centers to be established in Latin America and the Caribbean under a Summit of the Americas Initiative announced by President George W. Bush in April, 2001. The goal of the initiative is to address high rates of illiteracy and school underachievement in the region by improving reading instruction in the early grades for students in disadvantaged communities or populations. While it is understood that a wide range of systemic issues impact the quality of reading instruction, the Centers of Excellence will focus on improving teacher training to upgrade the knowledge and pedagogical skills of teachers.

It is expected that the Centers of Excellence will: (a) use a training-of-trainers approach to reach more teachers and administrators, (b) provide a clearinghouse of teacher materials, and (c) use information and computer technology as appropriate to facilitate information-sharing between institutions and to increase the scope of teachers' access to training and materials.

The concept outlined below for the Caribbean Center of Excellence was developed by USAID staff and consultants in consultation with potential local partners at the three University of the West Indies (UWI) campuses and the Joint Boards of Education (JBTE), following a field assessment by two education specialists of teacher training needs and capacities in the region. The CETT Consultative Committee has also contributed to the planning process.

### **A. CETT Overview**

The **goal** of the Caribbean CETT is to provide innovative leadership to strengthen reading instruction and increase the reading skills of primary school students throughout the English-speaking Caribbean.

The **purpose** of the program is to upgrade the skills of classroom teachers so that they become more effective reading instructors in the early primary grades (1-3). The CETT will focus on introducing a limited number of interventions aimed at teachers (and administrators) to increase their impact in the classroom. Rural and urban poor communities, especially those in remote areas, and schools that have a significant enrollment of Creole-dominant speakers will be targeted.

### **B. Populations to be served by the Caribbean CETT**

In the first year, the program will work in a limited number of schools in a limited number of countries. Preliminary discussions resulted in selection of three countries—St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Jamaica—and the proposal to target six to

seven schools in each country. Over the four years of the initiative, activities are to be expanded to additional schools and countries, reaching all twelve independent countries of the English-speaking Caribbean, including Guyana.

Services will be directed to teachers, school administrators, and other relevant education officials serving “disadvantaged” communities. In the Caribbean this means rural and urban poor, especially remote communities and Creole or multilingual communities.

Target schools will be selected that:

- 1) Show low student performance and reading achievement, especially schools with a significant number of Creole-dominant speakers and other special needs learners;
- 2) Are situated in settings or communities that are socio-economically disadvantaged;
- 3) Have teachers committed to serving the needs of low-performing students;
- 4) Have school leaders who are open to innovation and committed to excellence, or who desire to achieve these qualities; and
- 5) Do not significantly benefit from other donor-funded interventions to improve literacy or reading.

### **C. Program Components**

The Caribbean CETT will be composed of five mutually reinforcing components. The four central components are: (a) diagnostic tools to assess student performance; (b) teaching and learning materials focused on addressing key reading problems; (c) teacher training to improve teachers pedagogical skills, including training to utilize the tools and materials; and (d) action research to enhance the tools, materials and teacher training. The fifth component—information and communication technology—supports the core components by improving linkages between institutions and disseminating the training, materials and best practices.

#### **1) Diagnostic and Performance Assessment**

The diagnostic and performance component of the CETT is designed to improve reading instruction in disadvantaged schools by upgrading teacher knowledge and skills in two areas: (1) the administration, scoring and interpretation of diagnostic and performance assessment tools, and (2) the identification and application of appropriate corrective and remediation reading strategies. To that end, the CETT will work in cooperation with teachers and teacher training institutions to develop and/or adapt existing instruments for diagnosing reading problems in students in the early primary school grades. Tools will be field-tested and appropriate corrective and remediation reading strategies will be articulated. A “tool kit” of diagnostic instruments and remediation strategies will be developed and provided to each teacher. The program will also develop or adapt a simple method of maintaining records of student reading performance, which will include a chronology of applied corrective and remediation strategies. A method of progressively

transmitting these records of student achievement and applied strategies from year to year and teacher to teacher will be developed. The CETT also will develop strategies for disseminating the results of these interventions and encouraging parents to participate in improving their children's reading habits.

CETT's diagnostic and performance assessment component has three key objectives.

- 1) Improve teachers' knowledge and skills in using diagnostic and performance assessment and their ability to identify and apply appropriate reading corrective/remediation strategies.
- 2) Upgrade the skills of teachers to maintain records of student performance and achievement including a chronology of applied corrective/remediation strategies, and to maintain student files and transmit them from year to year.
- 3) Disseminate information about the results of these interventions and the benefits of reading in simple and accessible language for use at the school and community level.

## **2) Teaching and Learning Materials**

The purpose of the teaching and learning materials component of the CETT is intended to generate culturally-appropriate reading materials for the Caribbean which will support sound and effective reading programs and accord with relevant public sector policies and programs. Materials will be adapted from existing materials—from the Caribbean or elsewhere—or may be newly developed as needed. The aim is to generate low-tech, low-cost, practical materials that are quickly learned and applied. Materials will be keyed to reading foundation issues with an emphasis on reading comprehension, fluency, phonemic awareness, word recognition, and vocabulary building. A “learning to read” and “reading to learn” emphasis will characterize the focus on reading. Special consideration will be given to generating materials for students whose first language is Creole.

The teaching and learning materials component has three key objectives.

- 1) Increase availability of pedagogically sound, culturally appropriate and motivating reading and pre-reading instructional materials.
- 2) Provide teachers with materials and tools to improve their ability to effectively identify and address particular reading problems.
- 3) Enable teachers, students and parents to use appropriate materials to tackle particular reading problems as group class activities, for the individual learner in a self-paced modality in school, or at home.

### **3) Teacher Training**

Teacher training is a key component of CETT and of the effort to develop leadership, innovation, and capacity building in the area of improved student performance in reading. Recognizing that teacher development is a process, not an event, the CETT strategy encourages integration, networking and collaboration at all levels. The sense of ownership encouraged through CETT's collaborative approach also ensures sustainability by empowering program partners throughout program implementation. To ensure quality, teacher trainers will be rigorously trained in research-based methodologies. CETT's training component provides the "glue" which binds the other components into a focused, strategic program that responds to expressed and emerging needs and interests, especially at the school level. The ultimate goal is to positively impact teacher's instructional practice and improve children's reading achievement.

The training component has five key objectives.

- 1) Provide training that enables teachers to more effectively teach reading in challenging contexts, including in rural schools, poor urban schools, multi-grade and multi-ability classrooms, and Creole-dominant settings.
- 2) Reinforce and strengthen teachers' and administrators' knowledge, skills and attitudes to more effectively meet the needs of struggling readers. Build on existing strengths and develop practical strategies, methods, tools and techniques that can bring marginal readers into the mainstream.
- 3) Move the theoretical into practice and then feed back practical experience into theory.
- 4) Use CETT training events and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to introduce, gather, validate and disseminate research or related information to inform program implementation and build capacity.
- 5) Build on existing institutional and professional relationships and partnerships and encourage new ones.

### **4) Action Research**

The purpose of the action research component is to ensure that teacher training and classroom practice are informed by research. This component will disseminate and support research directed at solving problems related to factors that help or hinder children's reading performance and achievement—including findings of the National Reading Panel and of Caribbean researchers. CETT, working through UWI and the affiliated teacher-training colleges, will conduct an action research program utilizing both students and faculty. The research agenda will be mutually agreed upon by UWI and USAID after country and school assessments have been completed. CETT will only support research that is participatory, practical and action-oriented. All researchers will

be encouraged to disseminate research findings in a language and manner that makes the findings useable, practical and understandable to the classroom teacher, parent or concerned community member. It is expected that teacher-training colleges will be the locus of the research effort and that the research will engage pre-service student teachers in investigations and reflective inquiry to improve reading programs, especially for primary school students.

The research component has three key objectives.

- 1) Ensure ownership of CETT within teacher training colleges and refocus programs within colleges on practical, applied research in all phases of the thrust for improved reading in primary schools.
- 2) Enable classroom teachers and student teachers to use research findings and simple research tools to investigate and analyze school or community factors that help or hinder children's reading performance.
- 3) Generate and disseminate academic research that could be easily integrated into practice at the classroom level.

## **5) Information and Communication Technology (ICT)**

The ICT component applies appropriate information and computer technologies to enhance each of the other components of CETT. The use of ICT facilitates regional coordination, collaboration, and sharing of resources, materials, and information, enhances services, and extends the Center's reach. As part of the ICT component, CETT trainings will educate teachers to more effectively use the computers available in their school or district to access or develop testing and teaching and learning materials, to deliver diagnostic tests and reading instruction to students, and for record-keeping. The ICT component facilitates delivery of teacher training through various distance learning technologies, enabling CETT to reach more teachers. In addition, this component contributes to research to improve reading instruction, for example, by improved record-keeping and communications. Special attention will be given to schools lacking the infrastructure to install and use high-end technology. Efforts will be made to apply appropriate technology in these settings without compromising the potential of advanced technology.

The ICT component has four key objectives.

- 1) Enhance communication among partner institutions, schools, and other program participants across the region and develop linkages across the Americas to facilitate integration and collaboration.
- 2) Provide training to teachers and reading/literacy specialists to more effectively use information technologies in the classroom, reading resource center, library,

district education office, or other relevant locations, including to access or develop testing and teaching and learning materials for reading instruction.

- 3) Extend the reach of the Center by delivering training through distance education and providing resources via the Internet.
- 4) Increase access to computer technology and use of software programs that target early reading skill development, especially reading comprehension.

## **E. CETT Organization and Management Structures**

The Caribbean CETT will be located at the University of the West Indies (UWI). Within UWI, the Caribbean CETT will be managed and coordinated by the Joint Board of Teacher Education (JBTE), Mona, Jamaica, in conjunction with the JBTE, Cave Hill, Barbados. The Secretariat of the JBTE, Mona is located on the UWI campus in Jamaica while the Secretariat of the JBTE, Cave Hill is located on the UWI campus in Barbados. The JBTE, Mona will have responsibility for the central administrative operations of CETT and for field operations in the Western and Northern Caribbean, while the JBTE, Cave Hill will have responsibility for the field operations in the Eastern and Southern Caribbean.

To manage CETT, the JBTEs will establish a Steering Committee to provide overall guidance as well as to monitor implementation. The JBTEs will also establish a Project Implementation Unit that will have executive responsibility for implementation of CETT activities. In each country in which CETT is implemented, the JBTEs will establish a Project Advisory Committee comprised of the Ministry of Education, colleges training teachers, and representatives of the principals of primary schools, teachers' unions, parent-teacher associations and any association or NGO promoting reading or literacy in the country. To solicit support for CETT within the Caribbean, the JBTEs will establish the Caribbean Business Partners from those companies and enterprises committed to supporting the program.

The colleges training primary school teachers will be the focal point of the execution of CETT in the selected schools in each country. The Center will provide to each college at least one reading specialist whose full-time responsibility will be to implement CETT activities in the selected schools assigned to the college. Start-up activities will include country assessments by stakeholders and actors followed by a regional conference involving sharing and coordination of countries' activities. Implementation will be phased to start with three countries in the first year and include all 12 English-speaking Caribbean countries by the third year.

### **1) Steering Committee**

The Membership of the Steering Committee will be drawn from the following groups:

- One representative from USAID

- One representative named by the Caribbean Business Partners
- One representative from each JBTE and one from the School of Education, UWI, St Augustine
- One representative named by the Caribbean Union of Teachers
- One representative each from a Ministry of Education in the Eastern Caribbean, in the Western Caribbean, in Guyana, and in Trinidad and Tobago
- One representative each from the principals of project primary schools in the Eastern and in the Western Caribbean
- One representative each from a reading association in the Eastern and in the Western Caribbean
- Two representatives each from the principals of colleges training primary teachers in the Eastern and in the Western Caribbean

The term of office of members of the Steering Committee will be two years and members can be reappointed. Chairmanship of the Steering Committee will rotate between the representatives of the two JBTEs.

## **2) The Project Implementation Unit**

The Project Implementation Unit (PIU) will consist of the following persons.

- A Project Director assigned from the staff of the Institute of Education, Mona, who will be part-time but have overall responsibility for CETT implementation. The Project Director should have competence and experience in Teacher Education and/or Action Research.
- A Project Coordinator who will be full-time and responsible for the day-to-day coordination and implementation of CETT. The Project Coordinator will be located at Cave Hill. The Project Coordinator should have competence and experience in Teacher Education and/or Action Research.
- Three full-time specialists, one each in Diagnostic and Performance Testing, Materials Development, and Information and Communications Technology applied to education. The Specialist in Material Development and the Specialist in Information and Communication Technology will be located at JBTE, Mona, while the Specialist in Diagnostic and Performance Testing will be located at JBTE, Cave Hill.
- As CETT moves to full implementation there will be need for an Assistant Project Coordinator who would be located at Mona.

The PIU will be responsible for the implementation and coordination of the program and particularly for supporting the work in the colleges and schools, for ensuring the sharing of information and best practices across countries and colleges and for promoting innovative, inventive and creative approaches in achieving CETT goals.



### **3) The Country Project Advisory Committee**

Each country involved in CETT will establish a Project Advisory Committee that typically would include the following persons:

- Two representatives of the Ministry of Education, one each from Field Supervision and Curriculum
- One representative of the Teachers Union or Association
- One representative from the National Parent or Parent Teachers Association
- One representative from the reading or literacy association or their equivalent
- One principal of a project school
- One classroom teacher from a project school
- The Reading Specialist assigned to CETT
- The principal of the college(s) training primary school teachers

Normally, the chairperson of the Project Advisory Committee will be one of the representatives from the Ministry of Education.

The role of the Project Advisory Committee will be to provide guidance and advice to the colleges and the schools engaged in the implementation of CETT in that country. The guidance and advice will be related to policies and programs being implemented by the Ministry of Education, patterns and problems noted by parents, teachers and associations and also perceptions and experiences related to the implementation of the program.

### **4) Colleges Training Primary Teachers and Project Schools**

The focal points of CETT implementation are the schools and their teachers in Grades 1 to 3. Support services to the schools and teachers will be provided by the colleges training primary school teachers. The support services will be provided principally through a Reading Specialist assigned by CETT to the college. The Reading Specialist will have full-time responsibility to support the selected schools in implementing activities related to the five CETT components. On average, a Reading Specialist will be expected to serve and support 20 to 25 teachers teaching in Grades 1 to 3 in four to seven primary schools. The Reading Specialist will coordinate and implement CETT in the selected schools and ensure the interface between the college and the schools. It is anticipated that innovative and creative interventions pioneered through the in-service and professional development support provided by the Reading Specialist in the selected schools will feed back and impact upon the courses and experiences offered in the pre-service teacher training program. Where Reading Centres do not exist, colleges involved in the project will be encouraged to establish such Centres to serve as a resource base for teachers in the project schools and a dissemination point for the ideas and practices developed and employed in CETT.

## CETT STRUCTURE

